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SCIENCE PANEL REPORT

SRI STUDIES IN REMOTE VIEWING:

A PROGRAM REVIEW

1 MARCH 1984

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SRI STUDIES IN REMOTE VIEWING: A PROGRAM REVIEW

For the past eleven years, a small group headed by Dr. H. Puthoff has sought evidence that would support the case for extrasensory perception. In recent years, the focus of these studies has centered on "remote viewing" by subjects claiming to visualize the scene at a point beyond the field of vision, and in many cases, in a remote part of the world, typically not known to them by actual experience. The implication of success in remote viewing, if it exists, are revolutionary; since as described to the review team, it is manifestly incompatible with currently accepted scientific principles. Remote viewing of future events--"precognition"--evidently violates causality; real time remote viewing clearly requires a transmission mechanism other than any known process: electromagnetic, gravitational, etc.

The lack of a physical model should not be taken to preclude the existence of the capability to view a remote location. However, this circumstance has thus far limited application of the classic methods of scientific investigation to less cogent issues, such as controls for inadvertent cueing, statistical evaluation of the incidence of positive findings, estimation of false-positive and false-negative responses, and in particular, the design of experiments that would limit as far as possible intrusion of extraneous factors relating to personal interaction and observer biases.

The evidence shown to us is too impressive to dismiss as mere coincidence. Certain similarities between the SRI and Princeton results, obtained in very different circumstances by unrelated investigators, are particularly compelling. The Princeton work is somewhat more quantitative than that at SRI and leads to an estimate by Dr. R. Jahn that the phenomena he has observed could be

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explained by a transfer of information above noise at a level of about one bit per thousand. This of course raises the question of how much information is required to construct the impressions gained by remote viewing, a question which the investigators cannot presently answer. Therefore, the review team feels that remote viewing is either real or due to some sort of experimental interference from one or some of the participants; something one might describe as "inadvertent cueing." Although, on the basis of our brief exposure to the SRI program, we found no obvious evidence of cueing or collusion between the viewer and the experiment monitors.

The briefings strongly emphasized the investigator's ability to train others in their techniques. This training program has developed over the past five years through the dedicated participation of Mr. Ingo Swann. His diverse talents have been devoted to self-training which he now feels competent to impart to others. Approximately a dozen trainees have completed instruction to various levels of claimed competence. An important aspect of Swann's contributions relates to his dissection of separate elements in the perceptual process. Under his guidance, the technique centers around the use of a coordinate method to describe the remote location, expressed in degrees of latitude and longitude. It is here that any attempt at a rational understanding of the perceptual process is lost. Since the significance of the coordinates so expressed is unknown to the viewer in most instances, it is impossible to understand why such a method should be translated in the viewing process into a precise delineation of geographic characteristics of the target site. The arbitrariness of this approach has not escaped the investigators, but repeated attempts to

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elicit a rational basis for this procedure, or to secure definitive information about possible success or failures with other methods that they may have tried, were uniformly unsuccessful. The investigators' attitude was that since they had found the coordinate method to work, they were not disposed to query the mechanistic basis of its applications, nor to seek an appraisal of other potentially successful methods.

Mr. Swann has distinguished three phases in his subjective interpretation of his viewing capabilities. The initial percept appears very rapidly with a latency stated to be as short as 1/50 of a second. Thereafter, for a period that may persist for several minutes, increasing detail may be added. Thereafter, and only after as much material has been added to the initial percept as possible, is the subject encouraged to examine his subjective image in a critical way, or to make syntheses or judgments about the significance of the perceived material. Swann pointed out that intrusion of a judgmental or interpretive attitude too early in the building of the percept was generally destructive, and to be discouraged in the course of training others.

A considerable variety of material was presented with photographic backup in support of the validity of the perceptual method. Much of this was highly impressive. The data showed the effects of training on the success rate, which typically reached a sustained plateau at a level higher than prior to training, both for groups of subjects as well as for individual trainees.

What then may be anticipated if the program is continued? In the absence of a physical model for the perceptual process, no predictions are possible about higher success rates in larger groups of viewers concentrating on the same target, nor about the effect on success rates to be expected if the

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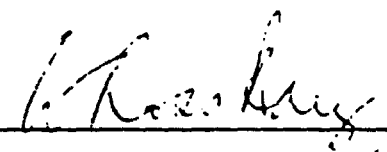
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technique were extended to those with special intellectual abilities or professional backgrounds.

Exploration of the phenomenon should not be restricted to specific applications. Rather, remote viewing should be studied as a scientific research program aimed at establishing the existence or non-existence of the phenomenon. In this way, a comprehensive and credible evaluation of the phenomenon should be available from continuing effort over the next five to ten years. The potential impact of this phenomenon is clearly profound. Therefore, a mandatory requirement would be the existence of independent but related programs conducted by others, with the free exchange of techniques and results. Only through independent reproducibility can a phenomenon so unconventional ever become accepted.

It is our conclusion that Dr. Puthoff's team warrants cautious continued fiscal support, and that the research should be conducted as much as possible in an open unclassified mode so that its reproducibility and accuracy can be independently verified by others.


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